



# ACCESS CURRENTS

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## **Board Holds Meetings on Vehicles and Communication Access**

On July 25<sup>th</sup> the Board held public meetings as an initial step in upcoming efforts to update its ADA guidelines for transportation vehicles and to develop supplementary guidelines on communication access. The meetings provided an opportunity for interested parties to advise the Board on key issues or subjects that should be addressed in these initiatives.

### *Meeting on the ADA Accessibility Guidelines for Transportation Vehicles*

The Board's guidelines for transportation vehicles covered by the ADA address buses, vans, various types of rail cars, and other modes of transportation. The Board plans to review these guidelines, which were published in 1991, and to propose any revisions or additions as necessary, including coverage of new or convergent technologies. Meeting participants included transportation providers, manufacturers, and representatives from disability groups and trade associations.

Many comments called attention to the advances made in the design of mobility aids over the past 15 years, which have led to a wider array of manual and mechanized devices of varying sizes and capabilities. A growing number of mobility aids are larger and heavier than the standard manual wheelchair upon which many access specifications are based. The Board was urged to revise criteria in the guidelines so that access is ensured for a broader range of mobility aids now in use. Some commenters cautioned the Board about the potential impacts of such changes to the design of vehicles, particularly boarding devices, such as lifts, and seating space. This discussion also touched on accommodation of new mobility technologies, such as Segways, that have been developed for general use but are beneficial for some people with walking impairments.

Recommendations also addressed securement devices and restraint systems, the reliability and quality of on-board announcements of stops and other passenger information, signage, level boarding at rail cars, minimum gaps between vehicles and boarding platforms, industry standards for wheelchairs and mobility aids, coverage of new transportation technologies, such as bus rapid transit, and accessible restrooms on buses. The Board will hold another meeting on this topic during its September meeting in Las Vegas (see page 2).

### *Meeting on Communication Access Issues*

In response to previous feedback from the public, including in comments the Board received in the update of its guidelines for facilities, plans are being made for a new rulemaking initiative focused on communication accessibility. This effort will explore areas where access for people with vision or hearing impairments has been problematic, including kiosks, point of sales and other interactive transaction machines, drive-through communication devices, public address systems, signage, and alarms. The Board's recent meeting on this topic sought input on key issues and considerations that should be addressed in this rulemaking. Attendees included representatives from disability groups, code organizations, research entities, and manufacturers.

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Participants identified areas where access has been most challenging or where further information is needed. These included access for people with vision impairments at kiosks and point of sales machines, various types of alarms, including carbon monoxide detectors, acoustics, telephone volume control, drive-through communication devices, and public address systems. Some commenters highlighted the need for research in various areas or called attention to new or emerging technologies for improved access, such as vibrating alarms, directional sound alarms, and audible or “talking” signs and wayfinding cues.

Additional information is posted on the Board’s website at [www.access-board.gov](http://www.access-board.gov).

Town Meetings  
Sept. 12, 2006  
Caesars Palace  
Las Vegas

10:00 – 12:00  
Transportation  
Vehicles

1:30 – 4:30  
Public Forum

4:30 – 6:30  
Reception (free)

## **Board’s September Meeting to Take Place in Las Vegas**

Each year the Board holds one of its bi-monthly meetings in a location outside the Washington, D.C. area to discuss various aspects of accessibility and the work of the Board. These town meetings typically focus on topics that relate to the Board’s rulemaking agenda and allow members of the public to discuss issues of accessibility with Board members in an informal setting. They also provide an opportunity for the Board to visit sites and explore access issues in greater depth.

This year, the Board will travel to Las Vegas to conduct a town meeting on access issues of concern to the public and ways in which the Board’s various program areas, including rulemaking, technical assistance, and training, can be responsive to them. The meeting will be held September 12<sup>th</sup> from 1:30 p.m. to 4:30, with a reception to follow. In addition, the Board will hold a public meeting, similar to the one in July, on the update of its guidelines for transportation vehicles and will explore newer modes of transportation available in the area, including a bus rapid transit system, double-decker buses, and the city’s monorail. For further information on the meetings, contact Kathy Johnson of the Board at (202) 272-0041 (voice), (202) 272-0082 (TTY), or [johnson@access-board.gov](mailto:johnson@access-board.gov) (e-mail).

## **New Advisory Committee to Meet in September**

The newly formed Telecommunications and Electronic and Information Technology Advisory Committee will hold its first meeting September 27 – 29 in the D.C. area. The Board created this committee in July to review and recommend changes to its standards for electronic and information technologies which were issued under section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act. The committee will also review the Board’s guidelines for telecommunications products covered by section 255 of the Telecommunications Act. The meetings, which are open to the public, will be held at the National Science Foundation (NSF), Room II-555, 4201 Wilson Boulevard in Arlington, Virginia. The meetings will take place from 1:00 – 5:00 on the 27<sup>th</sup> and 9:00 – 5:00 on the following two days. Persons wishing to attend must pre-register and follow NSF procedures, including its computer security policy. For more information, contact Tim Creagan at [creagan@access-board.gov](mailto:creagan@access-board.gov) (e-mail), (202) 272-0016 (v), or (202) 272-0081 (TTY).

### *Committee Co-Chairs Named*

The committee is comprised of 41 members representing industry, disability groups, standard-setting bodies in the U.S. and abroad, and government agencies, among others. Members were selected from applications received in response to a Board notice. The Board named committee members Mike Paciello, the Founder & Principal of the Paciello Group, and Jim Tobias, Principal of Inclusive Technologies, to serve as co-chairs of the committee. Paciello, an international authority on web accessibility and assistive technology, co-founded the Web Accessibility Initiative for the World Wide Web Consortium. Tobias has over 25 years of experience in accessible technology, including as a technician at Berkeley’s Center for Independent Living and as a rehabilitation engineer at Bell Labs and Bellcore.

## **New Resource Available on Rebuilding Accessible Communities**

A new initiative is underway to promote accessibility in the rebuilding of communities destroyed by last year's hurricanes. Rebuilding Accessible Communities, a joint venture of the ADA Technical Assistance Centers and the Access Board, is focused on developing and distributing guidance on achieving accessibility in reconstruction projects. Under this program, an on-line resource has been launched to disseminate information prepared and collected to date which is available at [www.adata.org/rac/index.aspx](http://www.adata.org/rac/index.aspx).

The Rebuilding Accessible Communities effort was conceived as an opportunity for community groups, advocates and the building industry to collectively reconstruct communities in a way to be accessible to all. The new website, an initial step of this program, currently provides answers to common questions that have arisen in work to rebuild devastated areas as well as links to existing sources of information. Additional resources, best practices and advisory information will be posted to this site as they become available.



Under this program, the ADA Technical Assistance Centers, which comprise a national network of federally funded resources serving different geographic areas, and the Board are providing technical assistance and training which is geared to the particular needs of communities. For more information, contact the ADA Technical Assistance Center serving your area by calling (800) 949-4232 (voice/TTY) or the Access Board at (800) 872-2253 (voice), (800) 993-2822 (TTY), or by email at [ta@access-board.gov](mailto:ta@access-board.gov) (for technical assistance) or [training@access-board.gov](mailto:training@access-board.gov) (for training).

## **Board Hosts Monthly “Lunch and Learn” Series on Section 508**

The Board is holding monthly discussion sessions on Section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act to discuss and share information about different aspects of the law, the Board's standards, and various implementation issues. These informal lunchtime sessions are typically held at the Board's offices and often feature guest speakers. Due to high interest and limited space, a teleconference option is also being offered with realtime transcription. The dates and topics of upcoming meetings will be posted on the Board's training calendar and on its website at [www.access-board.gov/sec508/training.htm](http://www.access-board.gov/sec508/training.htm). For more information, contact David Baquis at [baquis@access-board.gov](mailto:baquis@access-board.gov) or (202) 272-0013 (voice) or (202) 272-0082 (TTY).

## **Comparisons of Board Guidelines and Building Codes Released**

In updating its ADA and ABA Accessibility Guidelines, the Board sought to reconcile differences from model building codes, such as the International Building Code (IBC), in order to facilitate compliance. Last spring, the Board issued a side-by-side comparison of the updated guidelines, the original ADA standards, and the IBC (2003 edition). Additional comparisons have been prepared by the International Code Council (ICC) and the National Fire Protection Administration (NFPA).

A comparison similar to the Board's that is based on the 2006 edition of the IBC was recently made available by the ICC. NFPA has issued a side-by-side comparison of the NFPA 5000 Building Construction and Safety Code (2006 edition) and the updated ADA and ABA guidelines. The comparisons are available free on the ICC's website at [www.iccsafe.org](http://www.iccsafe.org) and on NFPA's website at [www.nfpa.org](http://www.nfpa.org). The Board's comparison matrix is posted on its site at [www.access-board.gov/ada-aba/comparison/index.htm](http://www.access-board.gov/ada-aba/comparison/index.htm).

## Courthouse Access Advisory Committee to Present Report in November

The Courthouse Access Advisory Committee, which the Board organized to promote accessible courthouse design, is scheduled to present its recommendations at a meeting of the Board on November 15<sup>th</sup>. The Committee's report will provide design solutions and best practices for ensuring access to courthouses, including courtrooms, which pose unique challenges to accessibility. It will also include recommendations to the Board on effective ways to disseminate this information through various outreach and partnership opportunities.



Chartered in October 2004, the Committee's 35 members include courthouse designers, disability groups, members of the judiciary, and court administrators, among others. Over the past two years, the Committee met in different cities across the country and toured a variety of courthouses at each location to collect information upon which to base its recommendations. The Committee visited local, state, and Federal courthouses in Phoenix, Chicago, San Francisco, Miami, Boston, and Washington, D.C.

The Committee's recommendations will provide guidance on achieving accessibility in courthouses without compromising traditional and necessary design features, such as elevated judges' benches and witness stands in courtrooms. The Committee will also advise the Board on strategies for promoting this guidance through websites and on-line courses, design guides and other materials, training, and outreach. For further information, contact Dave Yanchulis at [caac@access-board.gov](mailto:caac@access-board.gov) (e-mail), (202) 272-0026 (v), (202) 272-0082 (TTY), or visit the Board's website at [www.access-board.gov/caac/index.htm](http://www.access-board.gov/caac/index.htm).

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***Access Currents is a free newsletter issued by the Access Board every other month by mail and e-mail. Send questions or comments to [news@access-board.gov](mailto:news@access-board.gov) or call (800) 872-2253 ext. 0026 (voice) or (800) 993-2822 (TTY). Mailing address: 1331 F Street, N.W., Suite 1000; Washington, D.C. 20004-1111.***

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